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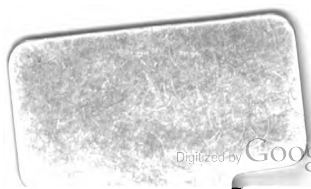
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SOME ACCOUNT
OF THE
CONVINCEMENT
AND
Religious Experience,
OF
FRANCES DODSHON,
Late of Macclesfield.

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED
A Serious Call,
IN
TENDER COMPASSION
TO THE
SINNERS IN ZION.

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To the Reader.

THE true knowledge of God, and experience of his workings in and upon the soul, has produced many excellent effects, which for our instruction, edification and comfort, have through divine counsel, been transmitted to us in the Sacred Records; that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might be made partakers of the promise; even as the Apostle Peter told the great multitude assembled on the day of Pentecost, (Acts chap. II. v. 39.) “The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

And the Apostle John in his first general Epistle thus addresses the believers—“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of Life, (for the Life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and

was manifested unto us) that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and these things write we unto you that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

Thus through the constraining power of divine love, the Apostles were engaged for the salvation of men. And why should it be esteemed a thing strange, that in this degenerate age, the Almighty for the awakening of mankind from the lethargy of sin, and opening their eyes, lest they sleep the sleep of death, is pleased to renew his loving kindness as of old, and pour forth his spirit afresh, on sons and daughters, servants and handmaids, thereby anointing and rightly appointing them, through the discharge
of

of their gift in the spirit of prophecy, to revive the life of Christianity, the primitive power of Godliness, which by multitudes professing it, is little known and less practised, having been long suppressed, and in this age almost denied by many, and supplanted by mere form? And whether it be not requisite, where we are sensible by the irreligious lives of men, (whatever profession they may be distinguished by) that in fact they are enemies to the Cross of Christ, and deny the power of Godliness, *from such to turn away*, consistently with the advice of the Apostle Paul, I leave to the consideration of such as suffer not prejudice to overrule judgment. if any such there be into whose hands this may fall, let them be pleased to understand that the intent of the Author in committing the following narrative to the inspection and perusal of the public, is that many may come to hear and fear him, give glory to and worship him, that made heaven and earth, the seas, and the fountains of waters, even as the Angel which John saw (Rev. chap. XIV. v. 6. 7.) fly in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, &c. and proclaiming the hour of his judgment to be come.

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No motive but a sense of duty to God, and compassionate regard for the welfare of my fellow creatures, could have induced me to publish things which of choice I should bury in oblivion, and not expose a life attended with trials and afflictions, almost unparelled in the present age. But the secret power and invisible presence of an Almighty Providence, has hitherto mercifully preserved me, in a degree of patience and resignation to his will, through the many tribulations, that in the wisdom of his providence have been allotted me ; at the remembrance of which, (as the mournful Prophet said of the wormwood and the gall) my soul is humbled within me. And if the account of them may be in any degree instructive, or of encouragement to my fellow creatures, in the course of their Christian warfare against the powers of darkness and delusion, let the praise and thanksgiving be to the Author of every good and perfect gift, as God over all worthy the praise of his works, now and for ever.

NARRATIVE.

I WAS born in Staffordshire at Cawden-hall, near Leek, in the Moorlands, in the year 1714; but Providence seeing meet to take away my mother about two years after, my father, being left with a daughter about four years old, and myself, left Cawden and resided at Leek during his life, which was about three years after the decease of my dear mother; but Providence was pleased to favour my sister and me very highly, in directing my father to choose for our guardian one whose care, fidelity and tenderness was so great, that it supplied in all respects the loss we should otherwise have sustained, in being so early deprived of our parents.

Our trusty guardian was brother-in-law to my father, through a marriage between his father and my father's mother, but by his affectionate conduct to my father and to us ever since we came under his care, he might be esteemed a much nearer

nearer relation: his concern for our present and future happiness was demonstrated in placing us with such persons as might be confided in, and also be instrumental to implant in our tender age, a love of virtue and abhorrence of vice. The education he gave us was liberal, being equal with that of many of much greater affluence, though through the goodness of Providence, (and my uncle's care) we had more than sufficient, and rather abounded than suffered want. We were instructed in reading, writing, working, and other things—as music and dancing, which by some were thought expedient for our sex and fortune, and which I had naturally a great taste in, and which in my more mature age, cost me much sorrow to lay aside; together with other follies of the like tendency, *viz.* singing, playing at cards, &c. which in the course of this little history, I may further treat on.

At our removal from boarding-school, after being there instructed as above, we
came

came into Cheshire, where we boarded with an acquaintance of my uncle's, a person of great understanding and prudence, who had married an acquaintance of ours : and for upwards of six years we lived together, I think it may truly be said in as great harmony and friendship, as if our happiness depended on each other's welfare ; being all of us esteemed sober and religious, more than some of our acquaintance of the same profession, *viz.* the Church of England ; being diligent not only in frequenting the public worship, but in private prayer in the family, and after that apart in our closets, where (more than in public) I was often favoured with the warming beams of divine love, which being sweetly infused and shed abroad in my heart, animated me with a secret love for retirement, feeling the serenity and calmness it brought me into, in which situation great was the condescension of divine goodness to me ; he being nearer to me than I was aware, to strengthen and encourage every good resolution in me, and also to

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judge

judge and suppress every thing that tended to my hurt, giving me distinctly to discern between the one and the other ; and like a tender father, speaking peace to me when I chose the good, and following me with the reproofs of instruction, when I joined with any presentation, that engrossed too much of my time, and was in danger of being a competitor with him in my affection. For I oft found a struggle in my breast betwixt religious inclinations, and a too great propensity to such earthly pleasures as are esteemed innocent by many, but ceased, (after conviction) to be so to me. And as I duly regarded my inward monitor, I found with the Apostle, the friendship of the world to be in its nature, enmity with God ; but I yet knew not how I should be enabled to renounce it, or be redeemed out of it, often lamenting that my affection should be divided, or drawn too much from the Creator into the creatures, and wishing I had been a companion with the Apostles and Primitive Christians, who followed Christ in a holy self-

self-denying life and conversation, and longed to know if there were in this present age, any that were like minded.

And in these serious reflections I was led to consider the profession and conduct of mankind in general, and compare it with the practice of the Primitive Believers, and often in secret bemoaned the great disparity and declension in life and conversation, which I evidently saw in our conduct when compared with theirs ; and sometimes the people called Quakers, were brought into my remembrance, as a plain, simple, honest-hearted people, that were separated from the follies and friendship of the present world, demonstrating both in their apparel, conduct and language, as also by their loving one another, that Christ was their Lord ; and that in the main their actions were more correspondent with his doctrine and example, than ours of the Church of England, or any other people of my acquaintance. But however, just and impartial these reflections were,

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they

they gave me considerable concern to think that any should in reality go beyond the members of the Church of England, in conformity of life, &c. to the example of Christ and his Apostles, as I could not in truth deny the Quakers did. And as I kept in a humble frame of mind, I felt a secret love and approbation of their simplicity and godly sincerity, though I had no great acquaintance with them, nor was much conversant with their writings, neither had been at more than two of their religious meetings, and those when I was very young; but the inward sense given me of them as a people, so conscientious in their converse and commerce amongst men, kept me from prejudice against them, nor durst I, like some of my acquaintance, (though in other cases I had as quick a satyrical disposition as most) make this people the subject of ridicule, nor speak lightly of the spirit they professed, feeling in the interior of my mind, it would be at my own peril, if I should so daringly and imprudently indulge my wit.

wit. Thus through many snares in company and conversation, I was by attention to my secret monitor, taught to do by others as I would they should do to me, and preserved in a degree of innocency; feeling the reward in my own breast, of faithfulness to divine instruction, to be peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And thus at an age when the world and visible objects sought most to allure me, it pleased the Almighty in an eminent manner, to visit and separate me from my former beloveds, relations, acquaintance, customs and manners.

In the year 1734, being just turned twenty, I was brought into a very serious state of mind, owing to a sudden indisposition seizing my dear sister, who with myself had to that time been favoured with a great share of health and prosperity, harmony and concord. But this was not always to last; for the sudden stroke of sickness which my poor sister had, deeply affected us both; and it lying heavy on her spirits

spirits, made her apprehensive of sudden death, which terrified us all, and was as a sword piercing through my heart, till I was brought to calmness and consideration of the innocence and sweetness of her temper and past life, from which I hoped she needed not dread the approach of death; but should it prove her end, which I did not apprehend it would, I hoped there was no room to doubt her happiness. Yet grieving to see her so afflicted, and being naturally of a bolder spirit than she, I was ready to petition the Almighty in the secret of my mind, that she might be relieved if it were consistent with his will, and if one of us must suffer, that it might rather be myself than she, judging myself less timorous; but in the midst of these considerations, I was informed as certainly in my own conscience, as if it had been told me by a person of unquestionable validity and authority, that I must undergo a great work, and know a thorough change before I could be prepared for a happy death. A query arising in me what this could

could import, and what this change must be, I presently had an answer uttered to my breast with great weight and solemnity to this effect—The change is this: Thou must with others bear the Cross in the closest way, and become a Quaker! Words cannot express the situation of my mind in this critical juncture. Hope and fear both for my sister and myself, successively took place; but I endeavoured as much as I could to surmount the conflict I was under, and aid my poor sister, whose illness still increasing, and in a little time reducing her to a very weak state, my thoughts and time were pretty much engaged on her account; and being mostly abstracted from worldly views of any kind, I had the better opportunity in that retirement, to adhere to the reproofs of instruction, and impartially weigh every presentation. And great indeed was the condescension of Divine Wisdom to me in this solid disposition of mind, many passages in the scriptures were unfolded to me in so lively and affecting a manner, that my understanding

was

was enlarged, and my heart more powerfully affected with the teachings of the Heavenly Instructor, in a few days, than ever I had witnessed by outward means or instructor, though from my childhood I had been diligent in attendance of religious duties, both public and private, and was by some thought to have profited therein more than many of my age or sex.

But when the light of divine life arose and shone in my heart, it discovered to me all that ever I did, both what stood approved and what was reprobable, in the sight of the Almighty; administering peace in the former, and bringing the line of judgment over the latter; letting me see clearly, that although the times of infancy or ignorance had been winked at, and I had therein been held blameless or excusable, the day now dawned, and the day-star arose whereby I plainly saw all types and shadows to be fulfilled, as being at best, as the Apostle says, but of the law which makes nothing perfect, though in measure.

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it may be our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ, who indeed speaks in the enlightened soul more closely, and aptly to its state, than ever man spoke; as I evidently found, and as evidently saw what to choose and what to refuse. And when I obeyed the heavenly vision, in shunning what it disapproved and doing what it required, I was filled with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. But when through human weakness, or the opposition of my relations and acquaintance, I suffered myself to be diverted from my attention and obedience to the ingrafted word of divine wisdom, and began to reason with flesh and blood, I lost my strength, was bereft of my joy and heavenly consolation, and became as weak, yea, weaker than those that had not been favoured as I had been with the immediate manifestation of truth, by the revelation of the Son of God in the soul; a cloud of thick darkness was suffered to interpose as the effect of my disobedience, and veil the divine presence; infomuch that with respect to enjoying a communion

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with

with my maker, I was as a vagabond on the earth ! All my enemies were let loose upon me, and my iniquities came over my head as a fore burden too heavy for me to bear ; and what completed my sorrow was, that when in this my distress, I called upon the Lord, he rejected my prayer ! In vain I strove to appease him with any sacrifice in lieu of obedience to his spirit ; all my abstinence, bodily exercise and voluntary humility profited nothing, but left me wretched, poor, and destitute of real comfort, subject to various temptations without from the world, and within from the sense of my fallen state and ingratitude to God, which had caused him to hide his face from me in displeasure ; and I feared I must never more be favoured with the light of his countenance, but be for ever lost in obscurity and shut up in gross darkness.

And had not the invisible arm of divine power secretly preserved me, I had certainly fallen a victim to the power of darkness, in that hour of close temptation

tion, wherein, through the suggestions of Satan, I esteemed myself utterly abandoned and forsaken of God: and in such a circumstance dreading the continuance of my days on earth, lest I should be suffered to fall into evil practices, I earnestly sought death, and resisted unto blood striving against sin! My life being a burden unto me, when bereft of the light of life, I refused my natural food, thinking I might by that means gradually compass bodily dissolution, with the least imputation of reproach. But my relations, especially my dear sister, having a watchful eye over me, and being greatly concerned lest I should by my abstinence shorten my life, obliged me sometimes to take food; but it was so little they could prevail with me to take, that they said, and I have often since thought, that it was a wonder I pined not away; which was what I secretly aimed at. But the grand enemy of souls was frustrated in this his attempt on my life; and I plainly saw that I should not be suffered, however desirous of death, to be my own executioner.

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Thus

Thus the enemy was again defeated of his purpose; and finding he could not touch my life, laid his baits another way; and in order to make the way of truth I had been convinced of, appear despicable to me and my acquaintance, he secretly injected a supposition into one of my nearest intimates, that possibly it might be the good opinion I and our family, especially herself, had entertained of a neighbour of ours who had sometimes been at the house, and done many acts of friendship for us, that had biased my judgment in favour of the Quaker's principles; he being a strict Quaker, and very conscientious in his whole conduct and conversation, which I thought was praise-worthy both in him and others. But I was very far from any personal liking or affection to him, though a report was soon spread that I was in love with him; how little ground there was for such a conjecture, and in what degree he was instrumental in my conviction, the sequel of this little history shall as briefly as I am capable, honestly set forth.

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The cross being so great, and the divine influence in great measure obscured through my disobedience, I fell in with my acquaintance in resisting the spirit of grace and wisdom in its reproofs, convictions and instructions, and passively gave way to the persuasions of my intimates, to try if the strictest life in the way of the Church of England, would not excuse me in the sight of my Maker, and meet with his approbation---O! the forbearance of a merciful Father to me in that time of probation; that he did not consume me by the breath of his displeasure, for indeed it was justly kindled against me, and burnt inwardly as an oven; and I was brought to experience in the words of David, *Sacrifice and meat offerings thou wouldest not accept*, nor any thing short of perfect obedience to the divine manifestation! But my way, as the mournful Prophet expresses, was made up as with *hewn stone*, and all attempts to open it proved ineffectual, until it pleased infinite wisdom to favour me again with light from on high, which

which overcame the darknefs, and in time wrought my deliverance through manifold afflictions, inward and outward, that would have overwhelmed the stoutest of mortals, had not divine aid interposed and secretly preserved, to the praise of his own name, who with the temptation made a way to escape, after I had continued about a year and nine months, in this precarious halting state, throughly convinced of my duty, but striving to evade it, and seeking peace where I was made sensible it was not to be found ; which made the cross I had to take up in giving up to the heavenly vision, much greater, and my way to the kingdom straiter than it would have been, if I had not made my bonds strong by opposition.

In the course of this proving season, much pains were taken by my relations, for the restoration of my health and tranquillity of mind ; but all proved ineffectual, till the great and good Samaritan appeared for my help, and in his own time administered the wine and the oil to my tortured
and

and wounded soul, that had been tossed with tempest and not comforted ! In this interval I made a visit to my dear uncle, my trusty guardian, whose care over me was great ; and I have reason to believe from his own expressions, the Almighty made him sensible in a good degree, of the necessity I lay under of making this great change before hinted at, and also of my regard to him, as my uncle and guardian, and my timorousness of offending him, on the one side, and my heavenly father on the other, by my repeated delays of coming up in the way of divine manifestation,

The searcher of hearts who knew the strait I was in, wrought upon my uncle in my favour, and made him plead my cause with them, *that strove against me*, and with a courage becoming his station, assert and plead for my just liberty of worshipping God in the way I believed to be right ; saying, I had as good a title to this liberty as any person, and none should abridge me of it, and he stand by ; at the same time requesting

requesting I would give in writing, for his vindication, the reasons that induced me to embrace the principles of the Quakers, which in the simplicity and integrity of my heart, I immediately committed to writing, as the the Holy spirit opened my heart and directed my pen as followeth.

“It is about a year and a half since God was pleased to declare to me his divine will, in the manner following:”

That if I would obey and be governed by his will, he would accept me, and make me the disciple of his beloved son; but to attain to this desirable blessing, he required that I should entirely lay aside all the vanity and foolish amusements of the world, which are a great hindrance to our spiritual progress, and suffer not his word when received to take effectual root in the heart. This I had experienced to be very true, therefore I implored his divine assistance to enable me to lay aside whatsoever was contrary to his will, or might hinder my performance of it acceptably, resigning myself

myself entirely into his hand, as clay into the hands of the potter, desiring to be what best pleased my God; in order to which he gave me an inexpressible satisfaction, in humbly reading his holy word, which plainly sheweth us the way, the truth, and the life himself taught us; I seldom took up the book but it opened in 1st Chapter of St. John's Gospel, which happening so many times much affected me, as I am persuaded it would have done any serious person, who, obedient to the Gospel, had a desire to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, which it behoves all very zealously to do, it being a work none is permitted to do for us.

I happened about this time to see a person a Quaker, from whose opinion the world imagines I conceived mine; how far I did, I will shew in as faithful a manner as I am capable. He seeing me more thoughtful than usual, asked if I was well, or if it was for my sister, (who was then ill) that I was in so great a concern. If it was only upon her account, he begged

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me to be content, believing he then said her illness would not be fatal, but would be removed in God's good time. If my concern was upon my own account, he said I must apply to God and his holy word for assistance and relief, and submit myself entirely to him, who is all powerful to relieve the afflicted and distressed. What fault could I find with this advice? I know it to be agreeable to Scripture and right reason, and had it proceeded from the mouth of a Turk, I should have been desirous to put it in practice; but how great was my concern which I found, not from him, but by a secret impulse till that time unknown to me, that to be a disciple of Christ, I must make a thorough change in life and manners, become a new creature, be born again, to be made an inheritor of Christ's kingdom. Unwilling still to entertain a thought in favour of the Quakers, I thus reasoned—Lord I ever found some of them to be a plain and I believe a sincere people, but they allow not the outward institutions of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which surely were commanded

manded by our Blessed Lord and Master. To which, as though I heard a voice, I thus was answered---“Obey my will, and thou shalt find my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed, and I am the Lord! I dwell not in temples made with hands, my chosen tabernacle is the heart; remember my servant David’s words, Sacrifice and meat offering for sin thou wouldest not, but a broken and contrite heart thou wilt not despise.” What said my servant Samuel to Saul, who spared of the flock for sacrifice---“Behold obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” Confuted thus far in my opinion, my troubled soul thus expressed her grief; is there Lord, no way but this wherein I may live agreeably to thy holy will? must I wholly renounce the opinion it pleased thee I should be brought up in, which as my natural mother claims me as her child? Oh! most severe and fiery trial! I have read thy word is sharp and piercing, yea, sharper than any two-edged sword; and so indeed I find it to be even to the dividing asunder, of soul and spirit,

joints and marrow; what will my friends and all the world say of me, if I profess the opinion of a people so much despised? Oh! that when I was born I had given up the ghost, then I had been at peace.

After these reflections I endeavoured to compose myself, but in vain; my soul like a troubled sea, found no rest, and I heard as though a voice had pronounced these words—Knowest thou, O weak woman, whose will thou thus disputest? Consider and dare not to offend me—remember I am God, able to kill and make alive, wilt thou then to please the world, and thy own will disobey me, who can destroy both body and soul in hell?—Obey my will, and thou shalt find it shall be well with thee. As to what the world may say of thee, remember it is enmity with Christ; that they who are off it, have no part in him; thou canst not serve God and Mammon; if thou wisely makest choice of my service, adhere to this the day of thy visitation, and thou shalt assuredly find my grace sufficient for thee, otherwise it will be hard,
 thou

thou wilt find, to disobey and cast my words
 behind thee ; remember Paul, he stood not
 disputing in this circumstance. My whole
 desire and prayer to God was, that he
 would speak no more to me in wrath, lest
 I should be consumed with the breath of
 his displeasure. I could not make use of
 the forms of prayer I used to do, by reason
 they rather augmented than eased the
 conflicts I laboured under, like medicines
 wrong applied ; I then truly knew my own
 weakness, that of myself I knew not what
 to pray for ; but the spirit greatly helped
 my infirmities, with sighs and groans un-
 utterable. Still unwilling to reveal the con-
 flicts I laboured under on account of my
 sister's illness, I strove as much as possible
 to keep my concern to myself, well know-
 ing it was God alone and his holy word,
 that could relieve me, unto which I ever
 fled as the anchor of my hopes, and solver
 of my doubts ; so great was my concern,
 that it shewed itself in all my actions, in
 so much, that all who saw me, enquired
 what could be the reason, which I no
 longer scrupled to discover ; upon which
 they

they immediately sent for the Clergyman of the Parish, who took much pains to convince me of what he thought so groundless an opinion ; but in vain are all arguments against matter of fact. Disputes may quench but cannot baffle the spirit of God, nor the mind once convicted of its influence : it is a bosom friend, a faithful monitor, impartial and not to be biased ; which since, I by disputes have vexed and quenched, I have been, (Oh ! grief to tell !) a second Magdalen ; but Christ on her sincere repentance, received and cured even her ; and as God has been so merciful to spare my life hitherto, and has done great things for my soul's deliverance, I am not faithless, but believing, that he is the same God that ever he was, whose hand is not shortened, that he cannot save, nor his ear heavy that he cannot hear ; but it is my iniquities that separate betwixt me and my God, and my sins and disobedience that have caused him to turn his face from me ; but though I should incur the disesteem of the whole world, by obedience to the discovery of the truth, God forbid I should conceal it any longer

longer from any, for should I lie against the light, my wound would be incurable. But I will declare it, that I may be refreshed; yea, I will open my mouth in defence of the truth which I have delayed long to do, or I had not been given up into the hand of the enemy, whose malice seeks my life; but his power goes not farther than God permits, who has mercifully spared me, and I hope will in his good time set my soul at liberty to bear testimony to the truth, and be his faithful penitent, entirely devoted to his service,

FRANCES HENSHAW.

Now I dared no longer accept any man's person, neither give flattering titles to man, for in so doing my Maker would soon take me away; for what indeed am I that I should stand in opposition to the Almighty? Shall the clay say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? God spake once, yea twice, but I perceived it not, in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep fell upon me; when I was slumbering upon my bed, then opened he mine ears
to

to receive instruction, to withdraw my heart from vanity, and to lead me in the way everlasting, to keep back my soul from the pit, and my life from the enemy's power; but he hath chastened me with multitude of pains and afflictions, so that my life abhorreth bread, and my soul dainty meat, because I have rebelled against the will of the Lord, I have not followed the commands of my God. But my soul has indeed experienced his mercies to be boundless and unlimited; therefore doth she greatly love and fear him, for she to whom much is forgiven, gratitude demands she should love much, for this is the only return we can make, or that God requires of us; and sure it is a pleasing task; for love makes all things easy, and we love not our own souls if we love not God, even to the laying down our lives, if his service require it, we should do it for his sake, who spared not his own Son for our sake, to reconcile lost Man to his offended Father: Oh! Let not any one delay returning to God, or despair of his mercies, on their sincere repentance; since I who
have

have drank of that bitter cup, have through mercy received some glimmerings of hope, that God will not cast for ever, nor shut up his old loving kindness in displeasure, so as not to pardon, how did he receive the prodigal? Nay, tells us there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.

If I am not understood in the terms of a second Magdalen, I desire farther to explain myself in this matter. God has for reasons best known to himself, I hope for his own glory, been pleased to permit me for a year or more to be grieved, nay even pressed with an evil spirit; whose power over me for some time was so absolute, that it drove me to the utmost extremity and despair. It was with the greatest difficulty that I strove to restrain myself from committing violence on my own life; what unfeigned thanks ~~thanks~~ therefore am I bound to return to my merciful God, who gave not the enemy power to touch my life, though with malice he sought my

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destruction. But God casting an eye of mercy and compassion on my lost and deplorable condition, has miraculously preserved my life from the enemy's power, and given me also a hope that by sincere and unfeigned repentance, he will bring my soul out of bondage, and, on my hearty obedience, restore the wandering and lost sheep to his favour. Indeed I know no particular circumstance wherein I have offended my gracious God, so as to incur this heavy punishment, except that of rejecting the doctrine and opinion of the Quakers, by refusing to join myself in their way of worship, when opportunity offered, which I rejected; upon which account began my affliction and trouble, which daily encreased, until of late that God is pleased to offer me to open the gate to him that knocks, and by seeking him to be delivered from my enemy.

After I had waded for about the space of two years, through unspeakable afflictions of body and mind, it pleased divine Providence to open my way, and cause my relations

relations to assent to my joining in society with the people called Quakers ; which I had not done above three or four months before my health was restored, to the surprise of all my acquaintance, and my mouth was opened in a powerful manner in a public testimony, to the praise of that Almighty and all-sufficient arm, that had wrought my preservation and deliverance out of the manifold temptations and provocations I had had, through unfaithfulness, to pass through. I thus continued about six years, under the protection of God, and obedience to the direction of his Holy Spirit, in a happy composure and tranquility of mind ; growing daily in the experience of the things of the kingdom and in the increase of the gift of the ministry committed to me. In this time, I had been led to visit several counties in this nation, to the satisfaction of my friends and to my own peace, in receiving the answer of well done in my bosom ! But the opposer of all good, who secretly envies the growth of truth, and would supplant the cause of righteousness by

subtlety and deceit, sought to exalt and cause many to think of me more highly than they ought to think. I felt a storm threaten. And in the midst of popularity and applause, found my mind secretly called down to humility and retirement, and thereupon withdrew from Scarborough, where I was on a religious visit, as soon as the nature of my engagement there permitted; nor do I know that I joined at all with the tempter in his presentations in myself to lift me up, or took pleasure in hearing the satisfaction of friends, or what the great people expressed concerning my ministry. Yet I believe the boaster was not then so entirely slain in me, but there was the ground of temptation so far as to prove and work me much trouble, which indeed was the case; for from a great degree of divine favour and approbation, a cloud was suffered to interpose betwixt me and my heavenly guide, and I seemed as one bereft of comfort and almost of hope. Great, exceeding great was my distress in this proving season; but the Lord was with me though I knew it not, and he was my deliverer,

deliverer, and I trust will deliver me to the end, and bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom, where the wicked will cease from troubling, and the weary and tried soul will be at rest.

In the course of this latter affliction I was brought very low, both in body and mind, and bewailed the loss of my beloved day and night ; nor could I be consoled by any thing short of the return of his favour and life-giving presence ; it pleased him at times to break in upon my mind, but he retired again, as a wayfaring man, that staid but for a night. It pleased divine goodness, never to totally to take from me his Holy Spirit, nor my gift in the ministry, though I waded thro' such deep waters, not I believe, on my own account altogether ; but that many through me might hear and fear, and give glory to him and him only, who created the heavens and the earth, the seas and the fountains of water. Scarce ever was a time of more searching of heart amongst friends, both young and old ; their tenderness and compassionate behaviour to
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me throughout the whole, was worthy of the most grateful remembrance and record : nay, what has often caused my admiration, in this situation, wherein I looked upon myself as one bereft of all comeliness, I was sought after by several of the chiefest persons in the society, as a companion for life. One WILLIAM PAXTON, indued with every qualification I could desire, found me in the covenant of light and life, and steadfastly adhered to his fixed resolution to seek me therein, till through much opposition arising from a sense of my duty, and the nature of his intentions, I was made his and he mine, in the unchangeable covenant of life. The Lord was pleased to bless us together for the space of about eight years, in which time I bore him four sons ; and after being helped through many visitations of bodily affliction, my dear and valuable husband resigned his precious life into the hands of him who gave it, with a fortitude of patience, becoming a complete Christian—his life adorned his profession, and his death crowned all ; being remarkably solemn, and attended with a full

full evidence of everlasting glory, as well as a promise of an easy or quiet dissolution of his body ! Thus lived and thus died one of the most amiable of his sex ; ripe for glory at an age, when few remember their latter end, or take thought for futurity. I cannot repine, though the greatest loser of all his acquaintance ; the Lord is sufficient, and as my dear husband said to me before his departure, would make it up to me abundantly, which expressions he repeated twice or thrice ; and it has been so, the Lord by his presence has made up all deficiencies, and is, and I hope, ever will be, my all in all, the chiefest of ten thousand, unto my soul that waits to be clothed with the beautiful garment of clean linen, the righteousness of Christ, that an entrance may be given me into the mansions of uninterrupted rest and never-fading glory, where the redeemed of the Lord, sing everlasting songs of praise and Hallelujah to the Lord God, and the Lamb, who is worthy for ever.

FRANCES PAXTON.

*A Testimony from the Monthly Meeting
of Morley, in Cheshire, concerning
FRANCES DODSHON, whose maiden name
was HENSHAW, and who was married to
her first husband WILLIAM PAXTON, of
the City of Durham.*

OUR beloved friend FRANCES DODSHON, was born the 13th day of the 3d month, 1714, at Cawden-hall, near Leek, in the Moorlands, in Staffordshire. Her parents possessed a considerable estate, and were respectable members of what is called the Church of England; but they both dying in her childhood, the care of her education was committed to her Uncle THOMAS SUTTON: and being favoured with a good understanding, she was carefully instructed in all those accomplishments which were supposed suitable to her rank in society, and was much esteemed both by her Guardian and acquaintance.

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About the 20th year of her age, she was religiously exercised in her mind: respecting the principles of truth, as professed by friends of which she became so fully and availingly convinced, (though through much opposition from within and without) that in the most trying seasons of her life, (as she was often heard to say) the foundation thereof could never be shaken.

Soon after she was united in membership with our society; she was called to the work of the ministry, for which service she was eminently qualified, by her Lord and Master, and laboured much in the exercise of her gift, whilst health and ability were afforded; travelling into most parts of England, Scotland, and Wales; her openings were clear in the doctrine and authority of the gospel, and communicated with lively zeal; she was frequently led to speak to the states of individuals, and we have no doubt her labours have been blessed, to the spiritual help and edification of many.

In the course of her warfare through this vale of tears, she had both spiritually and temporally, to endure a fight of afflictions; yet in all and through all, she was hiddenly supported by that arm of everlasting strength, in which she had most surely believed.

Her deepest trials were experienced when she thought the beloved of her soul had withdrawn himself, or hid his face from her; the exercise of her spirit, expressing the language of a deeply tried servant—"My righteousness I will hold fast, and mine integrity I will not let go."

During the latter part of her time, her residence was at Macclesfield, in Cheshire, with her son WILLIAM PAXTON. In the evening of the 25th of the 7th month, 1793, she informed his wife, that she felt more than usually afflicted; and in a short time after, was seized with a paralytic stroke, which deprived her of speech and bodily powers, except the use of her left hand; yet she appeared to those about her

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to be quite sensible, and often in fervency of spirit with the Lord; and we have no doubt, was happily prepared, to unite with those whom John the beloved Disciple saw in the vision of light, who came out of great tribulation, and had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

On the 1st of the 8th month, she quietly departed this life, and was decently interred in Friends burying ground, in Macclesfield, the 4th of the same; after a large and solemn meeting, attended by divers Friends from distant parts, and many others not of our Society; aged 78, a Minister about 56 years.



A SERIOUS CALL,

&c. &c.

THE Lord has a controversy with his people in this present age, and is drawing near unto judgment, wherein he will plead with them, and make himself known to be the power that ought to bear rule, not only in heaven, but also on earth, in the hearts of the children of men; and as one that has gone through various dispensations, and witnessed the terrors of the Lord for sin, I feel a pressure on my spirit to reason with, and if possible, to persuade, my fellow-creatures, especially those who profess the truth as it is in Jesus, to flee as for their lives, from every appearance of evil, which if joined with, will inevitably bring death, and draw down the displeasure of God sooner or later upon the soul; for God is faithful, who will render to every man a reward according to his works.

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Now, by the things which are seen, *viz.* the beauty and order of the outward creation, it is evident to all, whom the God of this world hath not blinded, that there is a Supreme Power, by whom all things were made, and preserved and provided for by his providential care, who is infinite in wisdom, justice and mercy, waiting long to be gracious, even to those who have rejected the secret reproofs of instruction, and refused to listen to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. Yet he has not ceased to follow, and if there be the least disposition in the soul, to turn to him that smites would save from sin, and the dismal consequences of it, both here and hereafter; for the truth of the Apostle's doctrine will certainly be verified in all; the wages of sin is death, Rom. vi. 23; and as long as it has place, and reigns in our mortal bodies, we feel the motions and effects of it drawing down our affections from the Almighty Creator, into an inordinate love for visible enjoyments, such as our senses can feed on and be gratified with, whilst the soul, the immortal and
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most valuable part in us, groans under the weight of divine displeasure, and finds itself at an infinite distance from God, its true centre, and altogether a stranger to that peace, which alone can render it happy here, and give an admittance into glory hereafter.

This according to my experience, I apprehend to be the state the Apostle spoke of, respecting such as live without God in the world, in the indulgence and gratification of their sensual appetites, being lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, than which I know not a more wretched and miserable state on this side eternity; to be a slave to the three great destructive enemies to our present and future peace, (the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life). What person in whom any spark of light, or reflection remains, would not rather choose to bow to the power that offers redemption? though it be in the way of close judgment, and an absolute cross to, and total forsaking of those beloved lusts and
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darling inclinations that have heretofore prevailed, and brought us into captivity to the law of sin and death, under which in an agony of spirit we are made to cry out—*O ! wretched man that I am, &c.*

This at one time or other will be the state of all ; in as much as all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, all must know a passing as through death into life, and witness the body of sin to be destroyed in them by the spirit of judgment and of burning, before they can witness reconciliation and peace with God, whose controversy has been against sin in all, in every age and dispensation. And I would query of the most obstinate offender, what pleasure the works of iniquity afford ? When the just judgments of God are revealed in the soul, and are executed on the body of sin the transgressing nature, to which divine wrath is due, and when the fire of the word lays hold of that part in us which is for the fire, it tells us in a language which our strongest arguments

ments are not able to confute---*That the wages of sin is death.*

These few hints concerning the nature and tendency of sin, might be sufficient to such as have an ear to hear, and are not stifling conviction; but there are a set of men, for whom my soul has mourned in secret before the Lord, in whom the love of pleasure is so prevalent, that it is the deity they bow to, and the only one they desire to know and serve, being agreeable to the natural inclinations; and when any checks of conscience or secret whispers in the soul, are administered by the true God, they seek to stifle them, and by calling to their assistance the weak weapons of human reason, endeavour to be wise above what is written, and arm themselves with arguments against the pleadings of God, by his good spirit in themselves, and also what proceeded from it, through the Prophets and Apostles; and like the wicked husband-men, are not content with executing their malice on the servants, but when the son appears, they

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say

say in their hearts, (which language God hates) this is the heir, come, let us kill him, &c. This inward revelation of the Son of God strikes at the very root of our beloved and inordinate passions, and will not suffer us to gratify them without remorse, who can endure it? say they, let us arise and muster up all our force against it, that if possible, we may suppress or overpower it, and be Lords of ourselves, and indulge our own inclinations, without being thus perpetually re-proved and restricted by an higher power.

Thus poor man wanders from God, and strives to be ignorant of his power manifested in the soul, that like a wretched outlaw he may rove at large, and sin with impunity, yet, even to such, wisdom utters her voice saying—how long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, &c. Why so hasty in pursuit of destruction? Stop a while, turn yet at my reproof, come under my discipline, and I will pour forth of my spirit upon you, make known my ways unto you, and guide your feet in the way of peace.

Thus God calls by the voice of his Son, the wisdom that was with him before the world was formed, and the chosen means or instrument to convey the true knowledge of God to man, which means whoever flights or rejects, renders salvation from sin here impossible, and consequently must inherit the wrath due to it hereafter: for however we may flatter or amuse ourselves whilst in the pursuit of folly, we shall assuredly, when the heat of passion is a little abated, hear the voice which in the cool of the day called to Adam after his transgression, and if attention be given to it, will convince us of sin, and where power to overcome it is to be met with, even in his name, and through faith in his power, who now appears inwardly as a reprover to put an end to sin, &c. Thus by grace we come to witness a being saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, not in our power nor at our command, but administered when and how he pleaseth.

And it hath been manifest to the experience of some, that when sin has prevailed, and the offers of grace been rejected, it has pleased God to leave such for a time, to let them see their own wretchedness and insufficiency, to overcome their own corrupt nature, and the temptations of that dark power that seeks their destruction, and suits all his baits to the inclinations of such, as by refusing the means of help, unhappily fall under his dominion, and are permitted for a time to be led captive at his will.

This, alas! is the state of many, some of whom are so far darkened, that they know it not, others, beholding their miserable condition, and the need they are in of a Saviour, are brought to look on him, whom they have pierced and mourn over him, yet cannot witness remission of sins through his name, nor reconciliation with God, until he be pleased to appear on their behalf, as a mediator, and advocate their cause with offended justice.

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Thus when we have sinned, must we come to witness an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, &c. Neither can we find salvation in any other name or power; for when he ceases to operate by his grace and good spirit in the soul, the works of salvation must cease or stand still, until he is pleased again to appear: the truth of which I have been brought to experience, having been favoured with the help of the spirit, and also proved with the withdrawals of it; during which I have found to my inexpressible sorrow, that no work, how good soever in itself, has found acceptance with God, nor brought peace and satisfaction to me; the cause whereof I have been led to search into; but the councils of God are deep, and when the light, which makes manifest, is withdrawn, we grope as persons in the dark, and are utterly incapable of understanding the mystery of Godliness, though we feel the mystery of iniquity working in us, in the manner expressed by the Apostle, first, in conception, which,

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if not timely suppressed, will be brought forth into action, and that will inevitably be attended with condemnation.

Thus, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. and sin finished, bringeth forth death: and the place of reception and product for this gradual growth of evil is, the heart of man in its degenerate state, wherein it is deceitful above all things, and inclines to evil, and if not given up to that power, that can search and cleanse it, is desperately wicked, for having the seeds of evil in it, the product will be of the same nature, until by the washing of regeneration, it comes to be purified and created anew in Christ Jesus, unto good desires, which if cherished, will produce good words and works.

Thus as evil has had its gradual growth in the heart, it comes to be suppressed by the work of the new creation, that where sin has abounded, grace, as it is received, and suffered, freely to operate will much more abound.

Happy change indeed! and greatly to be desired, and that all mankind may come to witness it, is my earnest request to the Author of every good and perfect gift.

Having on this subject enlarged beyond my expectation, shall leave it to the serious consideration of my fellow creatures, and if by making application to the spirit, which seeks the good of all, and would sanctify and save all, the least benefit may accrue to any person; may God have the glory, the least measure of whose favour is more precious to me than esteem or approbation of the world, which I have neither sought nor desired, in thus exposing my thoughts, but in plainness and simplicity wrote my experience.

KENDAL, 10, 2D MO. 1744.

The End.



